

Blueprint for Achieving **equity** in Virginia's Public Schools 2020



No issue is more urgent in public education than **achieving and ensuring equity in student learning** throughout the Commonwealth of Virginia.

Equity is a multifaceted issue that reflects variability in both geographic location and student demographics across the Commonwealth, as well as per pupil expenditures and students' access to the full range of instructional content and programs essential to success after graduation, regardless of where a student lives. As leaders of public education, we must take a comprehensive approach to achieving and ensuring an equitable education for all students in Virginia so that race, ethnicity, socioeconomic status, special education status, learning ability level, family circumstances, culture, and gender identity are no longer predictors of success. The Commonwealth can achieve these systemic improvements by ensuring that all students have what they need, exactly when they need it, to be successful in school. In order to accomplish this, we must be deliberate in providing the appropriate supports, removing barriers, creating needed learning environments, closing current gaps in opportunity, and changing the current level of educational funding that will ensure equitable opportunities for all students.

During 2019, VASS members identified five primary areas of focus that will define organizational efforts for change and safeguard a relentless commitment to equity for

all students. These primary areas of focus are: accountability, public education funding, Profile of a Virginia Graduate, social and emotional learning, and teacher shortage. In each of these areas, VASS members thoughtfully crafted goals, objectives, and strategies framing equity as the critical decision-making lens that will help educators and communities navigate the roadmap to success for all students. We invite you to explore this Blueprint for Equity and join education leaders across the Commonwealth in shaping the future.

BACKGROUND

Since 2011, the Virginia Association of School Superintendents (VASS) collaborated to develop two comprehensive guiding documents to help lead and shape the future of education in the Commonwealth. The first document, *VASS' Blueprint for Public Education, Bringing Reason to Reform*, was adopted in 2011. The second document, *VASS' New Blueprint for the Future of Public Education*, was adopted in 2015. Both blueprints outlined specific goals, objectives, and strategies in focus areas to ensure that Virginia's public schools would be positioned to effectively and efficiently provide high quality learning to

meet the demands of a rapidly changing world.

Since that time, VASS' voice, through the blueprints, have affected positive changes to policies and legislation to improve the delivery of education services throughout Virginia. Included in those changes have been the Virginia Department of Education launching the Virginia is for Learners initiative, which encourages a statewide focus on early learning experiences and a deeper approach to learning that emphasizes the application of content knowledge in the context of real-world problem solving and skills essential to the future of work in a global economy. The Profile of a Virginia Graduate, Virginia's newly adopted model of state and local accountability, reframed the high school experience to de-emphasize standardized testing and to expand exposure to life-changing career experiences that better prepare graduates for what comes next.

VASS' members who served on the Blueprint Workgroup committees, along with the entire VASS membership consisting of 133 school division superintendents and the superintendents of the Virginia School for the Deaf and Blind and the Virginia Juvenile Services Education Program, have worked diligently throughout 2018-2019 to create this document, *VASS' Blueprint for Achieving Equity in Virginia's Public Schools*. Through this Blueprint, VASS enlists the Virginia Department of Education, the Virginia State Board of Education, the Virginia General Assembly, the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, and all other education associations and stakeholders in affirming that providing an equitable education for every student is the Commonwealth's most valuable mechanism for reducing poverty, addressing racial disparity, building thriving communities, and sustaining economic advancement for all Virginians.



TABLE OF CONTENTS

Achieving Equity through:

- Social and Emotional Learning 4
- Accountability 7
- Addressing the Teacher Shortage 8
- Profile of a Virginia Graduate 10
- Funding Public Education 12
- The Call for Change 14
- Sources 15



SUPERINTENDENT WORKGROUP MEMBERS

VASS' Blueprint for Achieving Equity in Virginia's Public Schools

ACCOUNTABILITY

Chair, Dr. John Wheeler, Floyd County
Dr. Jared Cotton, Chesapeake City
Dr. Walter Clemons, Gloucester County
Dr. Michael Gill, Hanover County
Dr. George Parker, Newport News City
Dr. Alan Seibert, Salem City
Dr. Jason Van Heukelum, Winchester City

EQUITY

Chair, Dr. Keith Perrigan, Bristol City
Dr. Gregory Hutchings, Alexandria City
Dr. Carol Carter, King and Queen County
Dr. David White, King William County
Dr. Crystal Edwards, Lynchburg City
Ms. Anna Ruth Graham, Madison County
Dr. Peter Gretz, Middlesex County
Dr. Tameshia Grimes, Nottoway County
Dr. Rita Bishop, Roanoke City

FUNDING

Chair, Dr. Brian Austin, Lee County
Dr. Eric Bond, Augusta County
Dr. Doug Schuch, Bedford County
Dr. Jim Thornton, Isle of Wight County
Mr. Charles Berkley, Lunenburg County
Dr. Michael Thornton, Surry County
Dr. Gregory Mullins, Wise County
Dr. Jim Roberts, Retired

PROFILE OF A GRADUATE

Chair, Dr. Scott Jefferies, Wythe County
Dr. Jeremy Raley, Goochland County
Dr. Jennifer Parish, Poquoson City
Dr. Rob Graham, Radford City
Dr. Scott Baker, Spotsylvania County
Mr. Andrew Stamp, VASS
Dr. Jeffrey Cassell, Waynesboro City

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING

Chair, Dr. Laura Abel, West Point Town
Dr. Andrea Whitmarsh, Greene County
Dr. Eric Jones, Powhatan County
Dr. Shannon Grimsley, Rappahannock County
Dr. Mark Johnston, Shenandoah County

TEACHER SHORTAGE

Chair, Dr. Tony Brads, Culpeper County
Dr. Robert Arnold, Amherst County
Dr. Sarah Calveric, Caroline County
Dr. Mervin Daugherty, Chesterfield County
Dr. Doug Straley, Louisa County
Dr. Holly Wargo, Northumberland County
Dr. Kenneth Nicely, Roanoke County
Dr. Michael Perry, Westmoreland County

EQUITY REVIEW COMMITTEE

Dr. Lisa Chen, Botetourt County
Dr. Kari Weston, Dinwiddie County
Dr. David White, King William County
Dr. Eric Williams, Loudoun County
Dr. Tameshia Grimes, Nottoway County
Dr. Jennifer Parish, Poquoson City
Dr. Mark Johnston, Shenandoah County

OTHER RECOGNITIONS

Ms. Stephanie Krause, Jobs for the Future
Dr. Pamela Moran, Executive Director of VaSCL
Ms. Barbara M. Hunter, Hunter Communications
Ms. Diana Frezza and Ms. Niquelle Cotton, rethinkEd
Dr. Steven Constantino, Adjunct Executive Professor,
College of William and Mary

VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS STAFF

Dr. Howard B. Kiser, Executive Director
Mr. Andrew Stamp, Associate Executive Director
Dr. Tom Smith, Education Legislative Liaison
Dr. Marcus Newsome, Superintendents' Leadership
Academy Director
Ms. Liza Scallet, Administrative Assistant

SOCIAL AND EMOTIONAL LEARNING



The link between a student's academic achievement, social and emotional well-being, regular school attendance, and safe learning environments is well documented. A student's social and emotional development also has a long-term impact on his/her ability to succeed not only in school, but also in future career and life endeavors. When Social and Emotional Learning becomes integral to school culture, regardless of level, it impacts the formal and informal interactions among students, across every classroom, in informal settings (hallways, bathrooms, outdoor areas) that exist in every school and our communities. *The Collaborative for Academic, Social and Emotional Learning (CASEL)* indicates that Social and Emotional Learning is "how children and adults learn to understand and manage emotions, set goals, show empathy for others, establish positive relationships, and make responsible decisions." ("SEL Impact" n.d.) The research has been so clear that a multitude of professional organizations, such as the National Dropout Prevention Center and the National Association for the Education of Young Children, have included social and emotional learning as a cornerstone of their efforts in addressing inequities.

School communities that implement evidence-based practices and programs that support Social and Emotional Learning show academic achievement test score improvements of 11-17 percentile points according to CASEL. In addition, CASEL research indicates:

"SEL programs improved students' social and emotional skills, attitudes about self and others, connection to school, positive social behavior, and academic performance; they also reduced students' conduct problems and emotional distress. Comparing results from these reviews to findings obtained in reviews of interventions by other research teams suggests that SEL programs are among the most successful youth-development programs offered to school-age youth." (Payton and Weissberg, n.d.)



GOAL

All Virginia public

schools will implement a systematic, multi-tiered, PK-12 support system that equips students with competencies to appropriately manage emotions, develop healthy relationships, achieve personal and academic goals, exhibit constructive decision making, and demonstrate responsible behaviors essential to meeting the goals set forth in the Virginia Profile of a Graduate so students can live productive and satisfying lives.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Objective 1

By 2021, update Standards of Quality formulas to reflect staffing roles needed to enable school divisions to provide multi-tiered support systems for students who experience adverse childhood experiences (i.e., ACES) and to aid in developing school-wide cultures of caring through implementation of social and emotional learning (SEL) best practices and programs.

Strategies

- Through a comprehensive state-wide survey of school divisions, identify and assess current SEL needs of Virginia's public schools. Utilize this data to develop recommendations for additional staffing required to address the growing social and emotional needs of Virginia's student population. Such recommendations should provide divisions flexibility in how positions are utilized so they are able to address division-specific needs in providing appropriate SEL supports.

- Articulate SEL staffing roles that school divisions identify and report to VDOE for funding allocations including, but not limited to, Board Certified Behavioral Analysts (BCBAs), School Psychologists, School Social Workers and School Counselors.
- Identify and prioritize state funding mechanisms to support designated SEL staffing positions.

Objective 2

By 2021, develop a statewide repository of evidence-based practices and curated resources key to understanding and implementing high quality social and emotional learning support systems. These resources should provide flexibility to meet individual division needs.

Strategies

- Partner/Collaborate with organizations experienced in implementing successful SEL programs such as CASEL, AASA SEL Cohort, ("AASA: The School Superintendents Association" n.d.) the National Commission on Social, Emotional, and Academic Development (Nation at Hope Report recommendations), (Admin 2017) and the American Institutes for Research ("Center on Great Teachers & Leaders - at American Institutes for Research" n.d.).
- Assist school divisions in identifying and developing partnerships with state and local entities, both public and private, to ensure that high-quality resources, support services and programs are available to aid school divisions in addressing the social and emotional/mental health needs of students both in their school and local community settings.
- Provide competitive grant opportunities that allocate funding for public/private partnerships to promote collaboration and grow the availability of high quality SEL support services provided to all Virginia students, including intervention to provide social and emotional support for students dealing with the traumatic impact of racism and discrimination.

A student's social and emotional development has a long-term impact on their ability to succeed, not only in school, but also in future career and life endeavors.

Objective 3

By 2021, divisions will be financially incentivized to create a comprehensive, multi-tiered SEL plan that includes public-private partnership and interagency cooperation to enable school divisions to recognize and respond to adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and address student social, emotional and mental health needs.

Strategies

- Identify high quality, effective, school-based SEL programs that can serve as models to aid school divisions in developing their own comprehensive, multi-tiered plan to address the social and emotional/mental health needs of their student population.
- Provide incentive grants to support innovative programs and/or approaches to address differentiated student mental health needs that include support for students dealing with the traumatic impact of racism and discrimination, develop positive behavioral supports and foster the implementation of restorative disciplinary practices and programs.

The research has been so clear that a multitude of professional organizations have included social and emotional learning as a cornerstone of their efforts in addressing inequities.

Objective 4

By 2021, create a statewide training plan for staff, students, and parents including a method for assessing where individual divisions are in the implementation of a multi-tiered system of SEL and supports needed to effectively implement plans.

Strategies

- Conduct an ongoing needs assessment to help school divisions evaluate the progress and effectiveness of their multi-tiered SEL support plan in meeting the SEL/mental health needs of their student population. Use these data to leverage additional resources and funding needed to support student mental health needs.
- The Virginia Department of Education will take the lead in developing online training resources to assist school personnel in recognizing and supporting students who have experienced adverse childhood experiences (ACES) and building a culture of caring in their classrooms and schools.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- ✓ Changes in the Standards of Quality (SOQ) staffing formula and funding model that provide greater support and local flexibility for positions that are directly related to student social and emotional well-being.
- ✓ Availability on the Virginia Department of Education website of a statewide repository of best practices and resources foundational to Social and Emotional Learning.
- ✓ Virginia Department of Education-sponsored training provided at multiple locations around the state on strategies to help divisions develop and implement a multi-tiered continuum of scaffolded social and emotional support.
- ✓ Creation of a Virginia Department of Education committee with school division representatives to begin the process of recognizing the proven interdependency of academic success and SEL by integrating SEL instruction into SOL content areas.
- ✓ Increased opportunities for school divisions to apply for grant funding to support innovative approaches and programs to support students' social, emotional, and academic development.
- ✓ Changes in division and regional alternative education programs that demonstrate an increased focus on restorative practices and social and emotional learning.



ACCOUNTABILITY

Traditional accountability metrics have focused exclusively on standardized, multiple choice testing. After more than a quarter century of high stakes testing, achievement gaps between students within race, ethnic, socio-economic status and special education categories persist. As we envision a new blueprint for the Commonwealth of Virginia, accountability should broaden its scope and seek to measure students on multiple dimensions in order to capture the richness of our diversity. At the same time, our accountability system should focus on the dimensions of human development and growth, in addition to a fixed point of “proficiency.”

The new focus on skills and dispositions with Virginia’s Profile of a Graduate gives Virginia a unique opportunity to expand the scorecard beyond knowledge to include accountability metrics that take into account skills and career readiness. While we recognize that knowledge is an essential component of schooling, we believe the scope of work in public education must include the holistic human development of our children.

Literacy remains a cornerstone of public education’s purpose, however, as we prepare students for a world we cannot fully conceptualize, public education must embrace and be accountable for the development of the

whole child. Our graduates need more than knowledge; they must have the skills and dispositions to be self-determined, productive, and culturally fluent adults.

With a broader scope of accountability, we believe more children will be able to demonstrate their strengths. Equitable outcomes will be more evident as we broaden our focus from a knowledge-only priority to a culture that includes other attributes that determine future success.



GOAL
Develop a holistic accountability system that measures knowledge, skills, and dispositions, so that our students are equipped to thrive in a global, ever-changing, and interactive world. The system should also include student growth measures that support a growth mindset for students.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Objective 1

Develop a comprehensive assessment system that accurately measures both student growth and student mastery of key skills identified by the VDOE in the Profile of a Virginia Graduate (i.e., knowledge, skills, and career readiness).

Strategies

- Focus on assessing early literacy to ensure students are kindergarten ready and reading on grade level by the end of grade 3.
- The state assessment system should include both multiple choice and authentic, common, performance-based as-

essments that accurately measure both knowledge and skills (5 Cs).

- Includes a holistic view of student success in areas such as the fine and performing arts, student leadership, world languages, and workplace readiness, and provide school divisions with the flexibility to use these experiences to meet state requirements.
- Accurately measures student growth in literacy and mathematics in grades 3-8.
- Continue to limit the number of required assessments at the high school level to focus on the most essential measures to determine student college, career, and citizenship readiness.

Objective 2

Create the comprehensive assessment system in a manner that supports student readiness and personalized learning.

Strategies

- Support assessment windows that allow students to participate in assessments when ready rather than waiting for prescribed testing windows.
- Allow students to meet high school requirements early so that they can participate in workplace readiness opportunities (i.e., internships, service projects, practicums).

MEASURE OF SUCCESS

- ✓ Develop a balanced, comprehensive, and fair system of accountability that is holistic in nature, and improves student outcomes related to academic, social and emotional development, as well as post-secondary and career readiness. Multiple measures should be employed, which allows each student to maximize their potential in order to be successful in a global economy.



ADDRESSING THE TEACHER SHORTAGE

Virginia school divisions throughout the Commonwealth, regardless of size, rural or urban, or demographics, face a growing shortage of qualified teachers. Teacher shortages have long existed in the state, but the issue has become increasingly severe in the sheer number of unfilled positions, the breadth of subject areas that are hard to staff, and the diversity of teachers relative to the student body. The 2017 Preliminary Report from the Advisory Committee on Teacher Shortage in Virginia reports alarming data on the number of unfilled teacher positions across the state that has increased by 40 percent over the past 10 years (from 760 to 1,080) and has reached crisis proportions in many divisions—especially those with high levels of poverty. For example, two months before the 2017 school year began, the city of Petersburg had 142 unfilled teaching positions out of a total of 400, which equals more than one-third of their professional teaching staff. Additionally, the number of minority teachers has not kept pace with increasingly diverse student populations. Currently, 79 percent of Virginia teachers are white, but non-white students make up 49 percent of Virginia’s student population. This disparity is larger than the disparities in the Commonwealth’s regional counterparts. (“Preliminary Report from the Advisory Committee on Teacher Shortages” 2017)

Mid-career teachers may switch to new careers as a result of stress, salary considerations, or simply for a new experience. (“Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It” n.d.) Schools of Education show substantial declines in enrollment. The significance of this is on the minds of school boards, superintendents, school administrators, parents, and universities. Shortages are occurring in more subject areas than just mathematics, special education, and career and technical education, which have historically been hard to staff.



GOAL

Ensure all students statewide have access to effective teachers who will prepare them to be citizenship, post-secondary, and workforce ready for their futures.

Today, shortages have also become severe in subjects such as world languages, English as a Second Language (ESL), English, dual enrollment courses and even elementary.

All students deserve to have access to effective teachers. The teacher shortage exists as both a “quantity issue” and a “quality issue.” It is an issue of “quantity” because school districts across the Commonwealth struggle to find individuals who meet current licensure requirements to cover classrooms. It is also an issue of “quality” since superintendents are not satisfied with merely filling classrooms with teachers who happen to check the licensure box. They work toward the ideal of having teachers who are knowledgeable, culturally competent, skillful, and passionate about what they teach and whom they teach. They seek dedicated professionals who believe that all students can and will learn and are passionate about their responsibility in ensuring this. Legal, regulatory, and policy barriers to recruiting and retaining effective teachers must be removed. Barriers to hiring teachers (recruitment) and keeping teachers (retention) exist by law, regulation, and policy. Although some steps have been taken to improve the teacher licensure process with respect to reciprocity and provisional licensure, the need still exists for modernization which would hopefully streamline and expedite the process for obtaining licensure.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Objective 1

By 2022, attract an adequate number of qualified and diverse candidates into the teaching profession to appropriately staff positions in every Virginia public school.

Strategies

- Increase teacher pay to correlate with the state’s national ranking regarding measures of wealth.
- Expand the eligible participants and increase funding for loan forgiveness programs such as Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.
- Launch “Virginia is for Teachers” marketing campaign with prospective teachers as the audience.
- Make public aware of the shortage through an information campaign.
- Create public service announcements that promote teaching as a fulfilling career, especially to students of color in Virginia’s Historically Black Colleges and Universities (HBCUs).
- Establish a common teacher application across the state.
- Revert back to the VRS Plan 1 Status of the defined benefit model and eliminate the VRS Hybrid Model, which gives less ability to retire after 30 years.

Objective 2

By 2022, attract talented, high-performing, and diverse candidates into the profession.

Strategies

- Increase teacher pay to correlate with the state’s national ranking regarding measures of wealth.
- Expand eligible participants and increase

funding for loan forgiveness programs, such as Virginia Teaching Scholarship Loan Program.

- Launch Virginia is for Teachers marketing campaign with prospective teachers as audience.
- Make public aware of the shortage through an information campaign.
- Emphasize the teaching profession's impact and societal value to attract millennials.
- Identify ways to increase social status of teaching profession.
- Create public service announcements that tout how teaching can be a fulfilling career.
- Market the profession to attract a more diverse workforce being trained through HBCUs (i.e., Hampton University, Virginia State University, Virginia Union, Norfolk State University, and Virginia University in Lynchburg) to better reflect community demographics.

Objective 3

By 2021, create multiple pathways to teacher licensure at the state and local level.

Strategies

- Provide superintendents/school boards local flexibility to hire teacher candidates through local licensure waivers based upon successful teaching in the first year.
- Improve consistency and quality of pre-service teacher preparation programs and their alignment to Virginia's Profile of an Educator, Classroom and Graduate.
- Improve consistency of online teacher preparation programs leading to provisional licensure.
- Conduct a statewide audit of "grow your own" programs, career pathways, and other teacher incentive programs and then provide state funding to expand those programs.

Objective 4

By 2025, retain no less than 80 percent of quality teachers in the profession after 5 years.

Strategies

- Develop, implement, and monitor a comprehensive, statewide mentorship model that facilitates reflective practice, enhances skills and knowledge, and promotes collaboration and collegiality.
- Offer effective and ongoing professional development that involves teacher collaboration, constructive feedback, universal design for learning, literacy across curriculum, culturally responsive teaching, and promoting student agency.
- Improve working conditions at the classroom and school level (i.e., class size, discipline procedures, behavioral supports, teacher supplies, etc.).
- Provide effective principal leadership grounded in vision, communication, instructional expertise, human resource management, stakeholder engagement, cultural competence, and student achievement.
- Revise the teacher evaluation system to reflect a model of professional growth: reflection, feedback, and revision.
- Research a tiered, compensation system that recognizes instructional mastery, teacher leadership, student growth, and stakeholder engagement.
- Research and implement a differentiated compensation system for localities with high need demographics.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- ✓ Average teacher salaries will be at or above the national average by 2022 without requiring a local match. Currently, Virginia ranks 33rd in the nation. (Sarte et al. 2019)
- ✓ Average teacher salaries will reflect the current fiscal capacity of Virginia when compared to other states. (Virginia ranks 18th in "Per capita gross domestic product by state," so the average teacher salary should rank at least 18th in the nation.) (Sarte et al. 2019)
- ✓ Multiple marketing and branding strategies will be used by the Virginia Department of Education to attract an increased quantity and quality of teachers to the Commonwealth, particularly in hard-to-fill positions.
- ✓ Legislation will result in multiple actions to attract and retain teachers including reversion to VRS Plan I in the defined benefits model, loan forgiveness, and local licensure waivers.
- ✓ Implementation of grow-your-own programs will be supported by the Virginia Department of Education and successful programs will be shared with all divisions.
- ✓ Percent of quality teachers retained after 5 years will increase to 80 percent, particularly in divisions with the greatest percentage of hard-to-fill positions and/or low retention rates of novice teachers.
- ✓ Educator preparation programs in Virginia's community colleges and universities will be revised to reflect the practices and pedagogies that are foundational to implementation of the Profiles of a Virginia Graduate, Teacher, Classroom, and Leader.
- ✓ Working conditions data will be collected and used as one indicator to consider in addressing priorities relevant to school staffing.
- ✓ A statewide professional learning process will be implemented to reflect effective and ongoing professional development that involves teacher collaboration, relevant learning, constructive feedback, cultural competence, and opportunities for service to the community and the profession based upon intrinsic beliefs.
- ✓ A tiered compensation plan will address the critical need to provide salaries and benefits that are representative of teaching as a profession for teachers in every school division.



THE PROFILE OF A VIRGINIA GRADUATE

The adequate and equitable distribution of educational resources in all school divisions is critical to preparing high school graduates to take their place as active participants in a globally driven and increasingly complex technological world. This preparation will not happen by chance. By providing effective and relevant learning in the classroom, the workplace, and the community, Virginia will ensure the potential of all students to be successful after they graduate from high school.

According to the Virginia Chamber of Commerce, “The availability of a well-trained and educated workforce remains the top concern for Virginia’s business community, and with good reason. Companies need people with the right skills to help them grow, thrive, and prosper. Over the next eight years, Virginia can build its supply of talent through a deliberate focus on creating closer connections to the business community and jobs throughout its education system. These connection points include work-based learning experiences, the development of career exploration tools, and business involvement in the design of education and training programs.” (“Blueprint VA 2025” 2017)

In the Virginia Chamber of Commerce Blueprint Virginia 2025, a Key Priority was established to address that “Less than half of high school students, only 45 percent, felt positively about their college and career readiness.” (“Blueprint VA 2025” 2017) Youth Truth, a National Non-profit, National Student Survey reported: “Virginia’s educational attainment is slightly above the national average in terms of individuals with a high school education (“Youth Truth Student Survey” n.d.). In 2015, Virginia ranked 28th in the nation for the percentage of its adult population (25 years or older) with at least a high school education (“Virginia Performs: Measuring What Matters to Virginians” 2016).



GOAL

All Virginia school

divisions will ensure that Virginia graduates will leave school “life ready” and prepared for lifelong success by: Achieving and applying academic and technical knowledge; Demonstrating workplace skills, qualities, and behaviors; Building connections and valuing interactions with others as a responsible and responsive global citizen; and Aligning knowledge, skills, and personal interests with career opportunities.

Recent data on student engagement in schools reported by Gallup, shows that students’ self-reporting of disengagement in school is at its lowest in elementary school (25 percent) and highest in high school (77 percent) (Hodges 2018). Even more disturbing are the Gallup data on teacher engagement that shows teachers report a high level of disengagement themselves (69 percent). (Hastings and Agrawal 2015)

The Profile of a Virginia Graduate can only be attained by students in our schools through a substantive increase in active engagement among students and teachers. This begins with the commitment of leaders in our schools, communities, and government to supporting the changes essential to creating challenging, interesting, and relevant learning experiences and use of instructional practices and assessments that actively engage learners in problems and projects that are relevant, matter and make sense to them.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Objective 1

Through partnerships with the Virginia Board of Education, the Virginia General Assembly, local school divisions, and institutions of higher education, curriculum and instruction will be aligned with the Profile of a Virginia Graduate to ensure the 5 Cs (Critical Thinking, Creative Thinking, Citizenship, Communication and Collaboration) are embedded in K-12 curriculum.

Strategies

- Ensure that the 5 Cs will be embedded in the state Standards of Learning when they are reviewed and updated at the state level (Virginia Board of Education).
- Assist divisions to unpack curriculum, provide pacing guides, promote collaboration among teachers (Virginia Department of Education), and develop non-standardized, alternative assessments to measure the success of the 5 Cs.
- Ensure funding is provided for resources needed by all students to facilitate the work in the area of curriculum and instruction in support of the Profile of a Graduate (Virginia Department of Education).
- Build partnerships with the Virginia Department of Education, professional organizations, business, and industry to assist in professional development.
- Identify and implement best practices (school divisions).
- Provide high quality professional development that is relevant, meaningful, timely, applicable and that benefits cultural competence (Virginia Department of Education and school divisions).
- Establish a culturally responsive frame-

work to inform curricular and instructional efforts across Virginia, and include professional learning to support the use of the framework.

Objective 2

By 2021, the Commonwealth's educators will understand and apply knowledge and skills necessary to innovate and conduct school/division redesign work successfully.

Strategies

- Deregulate requirements from the Virginia Board of Education and the Virginia Department of Education to allow for innovation that supports variability in learning time, assessments, and modes of instruction to capitalize on student learning differences.
- Advocate for the human and financial resources necessary to ensure ideal learning environments that include optimal class size, highly qualified personnel, adequate resources, modernized facilities, transportation, and other operational items that impact learning.
- Advocate for equitable implementation of technological advances across the Commonwealth to include funds for technology to support contemporary student learning in formal and informal settings, develop partnerships in rural areas to increase access to broadband and eliminate the growing digital divide.
- Provide training in skills and knowledge development necessary for division administrators and teachers to reimagine learning outcomes, programs, and coursework consistent with competencies that are foundational to the Profile of a Virginia Graduate by increasing student and teacher engagement, deeper learning, and equity of access for all students to rich, challenging learning experiences.

Objective 3

By 2021, create a wide variety of opportunities for all students to acquire workplace skills and work-related experiences.

Strategies

- Create a marketing plan template for divisions to use to engage local busi-

ness, industry, the public sector and non-profits to create internships, externships, shadowing experiences, and other work-related experiences for all students.

- Develop internship coordinators and career connection coaches in school divisions to create networks and secure placements.
- Design and develop a teacher candidate program within all school divisions.
- Expect business, industry, and public sector to partner with local school divisions to develop work-related experiences.

Objective 4

By 2021, the Virginia Department of Education will develop and provide a variety of measures to assess and monitor the initiatives detailed within the Profile of a Virginia Graduate.

Strategy

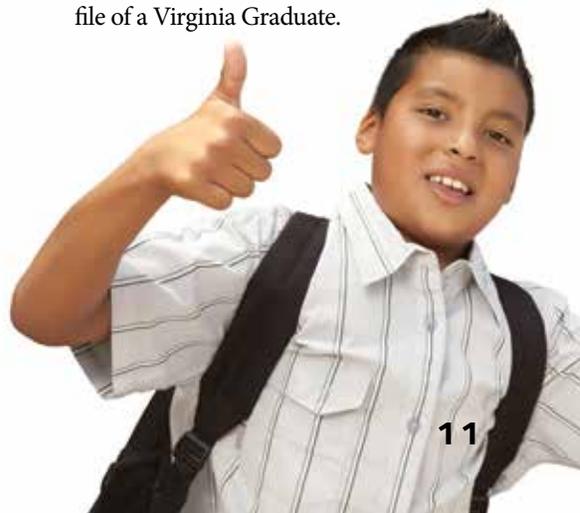
- The Virginia Department of Education will convene a diverse team of educators in partnership with state educational organizations to develop benchmarks for use by divisions to assess and monitor the impact of initiatives embedded in the Profile of a Virginia graduate.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- ✓ The Profile of a Virginia Graduate competencies will be integrated and aligned throughout the K-12 Standards of Learning as SOLs are revised as scheduled by the Virginia Department of Education.
- ✓ Regional professional learning conferences to support division staff will be planned, scheduled, funded, and implemented, 1) so that instructional resources can be designed and shared to align local curriculum, assessment, and instruction with revised SOLs and 2) to identify, reinforce, and model best practices for implementation of the Profile of the Graduate, Teacher, Classroom, and Leader.
- ✓ Partnerships will be developed with associations, local community businesses, corporations, and the Virginia Department of Education so that formal and informal professional learning and development will be available to ensure educators develop deep understanding

of changing workforce and community needs that are addressed through the Profile of a Virginia Graduate (i.e., tech tours, teacher internships, etc.)

- ✓ Use the School Divisions of Innovation model (Soifer 2017) division site visits, and partnerships of associations, higher education, businesses, and agencies to create and support local innovations designed to change structures, personnel use, curriculum, assessment, and instructional practices that support work-based competency development, knowledge acquisition, and how-to-learn skills essential to lifelong learning, citizenship, cultural competence, and an evolving workforce.
- ✓ Equitable funding sources will ensure each division has the technology and technology support, including staff and infrastructure, to provide and ensure local access for all educators and students to accomplish learning tasks in their schools and communities.
- ✓ Ensure state and local funding that improves divisions' workforce conditions and learning options and experiences so that all students have access to ideal learning environments regardless of the school they attend.
- ✓ Each division will have the resources they need to implement a marketing plan essential to building local support and implementation of work-based experiences.
- ✓ Fund additional SOQ staffing to coordinate career and work-based experiences and create opportunities for students that include career coaching that is not but not limited to a future teacher candidate program in schools.
- ✓ Teams of educators convene and produce benchmarks to assess and monitor initiatives essential to implementing the Profile of a Virginia Graduate.



FUNDING PUBLIC EDUCATION

Perhaps no issue strikes at the heart of equity more than the funding of public education. VASS believes that the most significant concern is the overall amount of state funding made available to school divisions. Specifically, the funding that is made available to PK-12 public education by Virginia is well below the actual investment in the children by localities. Appropriate funding for public education has been discussed for the better part of 40 years and has yet to be adequately addressed.

The true “cost” of investing in the children who reside in communities throughout the Commonwealth is reflected in the total investment made by both localities and the state. While some localities have the revenue capacity to fund above the Required Local Effort and Required Local Match, either the funding for the Standards of Quality is inadequate or the Standards of Quality are set too low. In particular, state funding to divisions over time has never recovered from the Recession of 2009. (Lanza 2019)

While funding issues may be portrayed as being a “large, urban” or “small, rural” issue, the overall amount of funding from the state is the most significant challenge. With the current formula, the division’s enrollment has little to do with the amount of support that is provided per pupil from the state. However, the amount that is budgeted for PK-12 public education and the corresponding SOQ calculations have the most dramatic impact.



GOAL

Funding for public education in Virginia should be adequate to ensure that every student in the Commonwealth, regardless of jurisdiction, has the opportunity to become a high-achieving and high-performing citizen who contributes to the community and the workforce of the 21st century.

OBJECTIVES AND STRATEGIES

Objective 1

By 2022, funding for teacher compensation in Virginia should place teachers at the national average.

Strategies

- Increase the average teacher salary to the national average by 2022 without requiring a local match. Currently, Virginia ranks 33rd in the nation. (Sarte et al. 2019)
- By 2024, the average teacher salaries will reflect the current fiscal capacity of Virginia when compared to other states. That is, since Virginia ranks 18th in “Per capita gross domestic product by state,” then the average teacher salary should rank at least 18th in the nation. (Sarte et al. 2019)
- Develop an aligned communication strategy with other advocacy groups that

support public education (e.g., Virginia Public Education Coalition (VPEC), which represents 14 different education groups) to garner public support for funding PK-12 education. This strategy should include the use of personal stories and related data representing why this objective and strategies are essential at classroom, division, regional, and state levels.

Objective 2

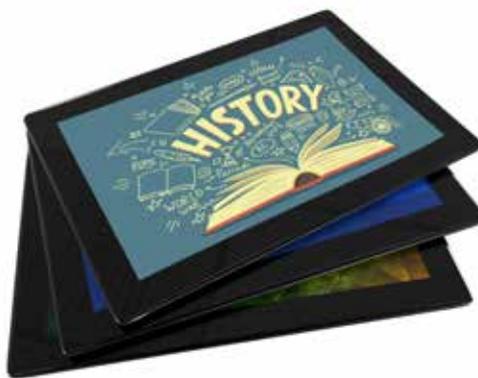
By 2021, increase overall funding for PK-12 public education without requiring a local match.

Strategy

- Partner with VACo and VML to ensure the General Assembly authorizes and funds an independent Educational Adequacy Study to determine the appropriate level of resources needed for school divisions to meet state accountability



requirements. The study should examine particular challenges for schools, such as the effect of concentrations of poverty, demographic changes, accelerated growth and declining enrollments, and identify funding required to meet the Standards of Learning, Standards of Accreditation, and Standards of Quality.



Objective 3

By 2022, eliminate the support staff cap and increase the SOQ ratios of support staff per teacher to improve services to all students without requiring a local funding match.

Strategy

- Use results from the Educational Adequacy Study to determine and fund the appropriate ratio of support staff needed to provide services so that all PK-12 students achieve learning success as evidenced by attendance, academic achievement, social and emotional development, and Profile of a Virginia Graduate competencies.

Objective 4

By 2023, fund all state Basic Aid at or above pre-recession levels and provide full utilization of Lottery Fund proceeds without supplanting other state funding. (“JLARC, State Spending and K-12 Standards of Quality” n.d.)

Strategies

- Adjust state funding formulas to reflect actual annual inflation rate.
- Restore the use of Lottery Fund proceeds as supplemental without supplanting state funding and relieving the state government of its responsibility to appropriately fund public education (i.e., at the time of this report, 60 percent of lottery funding is being used to supplant various state categorical funding).
- Use the Educational Advocacy Study to determine state funds that each division should currently receive, if adjusted annually for inflation, using funding formulas to ensure local funding at or above pre-recession levels accounting, and for increased services mandated by legislation and regulation.

Objective 5

Restore and provide state funding for facility/ infrastructure to ensure that all students have access to modern facilities and infrastructure, regardless of each locality’s ability to pay.

Strategies

- Fund the Virginia Public School Construction Grants Program consistent with Code of Virginia § 22.1-175.1
- Develop new partnerships to provide alternative funding sources essential to modernizing and renovating school facilities to more intentionally support the contemporary learning experiences that align with students’ development of Profile of a Virginia Graduate competencies.

Objective 6

Increase At-Risk Add-On funding and allow greater local flexibility in determining how to maximize the use of these funds to ensure all students are successful in school by any accountability measure.

Strategies

- Increase the funding cap to a minimum of 16 percent for the At-Risk Add-On which is currently at 14.5 percent (19-20) so that divisions with significant poverty, or a low composite index, or less ability to fund education receive increased funding to support and align programs, staffing, local innovation initiatives that address student achievement, implementation of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate, and work-force needs in those divisions.
- Determine how to modify regulations that direct use of At-Risk Add-On funds to provide increased flexibility in use of funds by divisions.

MEASURES OF SUCCESS

- ✓ Meet stated benchmarks for teacher compensation based on national measures including state salary rankings and per capita gross domestic product by state.
- ✓ Use of partnership communication plan and strategies that result in full public support for increased state funding for PK-12 education needs as identified in this *Blueprint for Equity in Virginia’s Public Schools*.
- ✓ An independent Education Adequacy Study is completed and report recommendations are used to inform legislators, the Virginia Board of Education, local School Boards, business partners, and communities across Virginia for the resources needed to identify current educational challenges and address those challenges with provision of the resources necessary to ensure equity and access to the best learning experiences possible, regardless of where a student lives or his/her own personal circumstances.
- ✓ The SOQ support staff positions and ratios are funded and increase to fully support the needs of 1) diverse schools 2) all PK-12 students and 3) the contemporary learning practices and program options essential to implementing the Profile of a Virginia Graduate in every division.
- ✓ Every school division receives funding from the state and other partnerships necessary to modernize, build, and renovate school facilities so that PK-12 contemporary learning practices and initiatives can be developed to support implementation of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate.
- ✓ Increased state funding is made available to divisions with challenges of significant poverty, or a low composite index, or insufficient local funds to adequately provide facilities, staff, and services to all students.
- ✓ Regulations are modified to allow the use of At-Risk Add-On funds to increase local flexibility in order to more effectively meet learning needs.

THE CALL FOR CHANGE



We are in the business of unfolding the unique human potential of every child.

—VIRGINIA ASSOCIATION OF SCHOOL SUPERINTENDENTS



Virginia is a national leader in implementing educational innovation critical to all students receiving not just an adequate education but one that is best in class. The Virginia Association of School Superintendents has established a successful track record in its work as a key advocacy leader with the General Assembly and the Virginia Department of Education to obtain and direct resources so that schools across the Commonwealth will meet the high expectations that the public holds for Virginia's PK-12 schools and their graduates.

In the first VASS *Blueprint for the Future of Public Education* (2011), superintendents defined key changes they believed were critical to advancing student learning with emphasis on integration of performance competencies, multiple means of assessment, and a focus on grade appropriate career development experiences that serve to prepare students for a globally competitive market. VASS leaders were instrumental members of the Governor's Standards of Learning Innovation Committee in bringing forward recommendations for changes in state assessments that were implemented through legislative action by the General Assembly. In 2015, the SOL Innovation Committee recommended development of the Profile of a Virginia Graduate and that recommendation was legislated into action and further developed by the Virginia Board of Education.

The New Blueprint for the Future of Public Education was released in 2015 by VASS with a focus on advocacy to the General Assembly to fully fund the state's share of the standards that the General Assembly uses to define the quality of education – the Virginia Standards of Quality or SOQ. The 2015 Blueprint also emphasized increased flexibility in local decision-making about seat-time, test administration, and alternative pathways to verify credits.

In this latest iteration, a *Blueprint for Equity*, superintendents articulate a “Call for Change” as a vision of equity that incorporates advocacy for resources necessary to ensure that our youngest learners in pre-school to our seniors in high school all participate in rich, challenging learning experiences, in ideal learning environments, taught by excellent, engaged educators.

However, VASS members know this alone is not enough to sustain the momentum of Virginia's evolving culture of educational innovation and commitment to equity.

Teachers must have access to exemplary professional development opportunities, competitive pay, and a variety of tools and resources to level the learning playing field for every student enrolled in Virginia's public schools.

Divisions with extensive challenges must receive the funding and resources they need so their students are not denied the educational opportunities available to peers in more privileged zip codes.

Students must receive the adult support they need to find personal pathways to social, emotional, and academic development and success.

The partnerships forged through implementation of the goals, objectives, and strategies in the Blueprint for Equity will ensure that Virginia is for Learners, all learners, no matter where they live or the circumstances of their lives. “What the best and wisest parent wants for their child, that must we want for all the children of the community. Anything less is unlovely, and left unchecked, destroys our democracy” (Dewey).





BLUEPRINT FOR ACHIEVING EQUITY SOURCES

"AASA: The School Superintendents Association." n.d. Accessed October 16, 2019. <https://www.aasa.org/czi.aspx>.

Admin. 2017. "From a Nation at Risk to a Nation at Hope." A Nation At Hope. January 30, 2017. <http://nationathope.org/>.

ASCD. n.d. "ASCD Whole Child Initiative." Accessed October 16, 2019. <http://www.ascd.org/whole-child.aspx>.

"Blueprint Va 2025." 2017. Virginia Chamber of Commerce. <https://www.vachamber.com/wp-content/uploads/2018/02/Blueprint-Virginia-2025.pdf>.

"Center on Great Teachers & Leaders - at American Institutes for Research." n.d. Center on Great Teachers & Leaders. Accessed October 16, 2019. <https://gtlcenter.org/sel-school>.

"Classroom Assessment Scoring System™." 2017. Curry School of Education and Human Development | University of Virginia. August 10, 2017. <https://curry.virginia.edu/classroom-assessment-scoring-system>.

Hastings, M., and S. Agrawal. 2015. "Lack of Teacher Engagement Linked to 2.3 Million Missed Workdays." Gallup Research Group. <https://news.gallup.com/poll/180455/lack-teacher-engagement-linked-million-missed-workdays.aspx>.

Hodges, by Tim. 2018. "School Engagement Is More Than Just Talk." Gallup.com. Gallup. 2018. <https://www.gallup.com/education/244022/school-engagement-talk.aspx>.

"JLARC | State Spending and K-12 Standards of Quality." n.d. Accessed October 16, 2019. <http://jlarc.virginia.gov/state-spending-soq.asp>.

Lanza, Edward. 2019. "Actual Fiscal Year 2018 Required Local Effort and Required Local Match; Certification of Budgeted Fiscal Year 2019 Required Local Effort and Required Local Match." Virginia Department of Education. <https://rga.lis.virginia.gov/Published/2019/RD42/PDF>.

Payton, John, and Roger Weissberg. n.d. "The Positive Impact of Social and Emotional Learning from Kindergarten through Eighth Grade." <https://www.casel.org/wp-content/uploads/2016/08/PDF-4-the-positive-impact-of-social-and-emotional-learning-for-kindergarten-to-eighth-grade-students-executive-summary.pdf>.

"Preliminary Report from the Advisory Committee on Teacher Shortages." 2017. In . Office of the Secretary of Education. <https://www.education.virginia.gov/media/governorviriniagov/secretary-of-education/pdf/final-acts-report.pdf>.

Sarte, Kimberly, Danielle Childress, Nick Galvin, and Brittany. 2019. "Virginia Compared to the Other States: 2019 Edition." JLARC. http://jlarc.virginia.gov/pdfs/other/2019_Virginia_compared.pdf.

"SEL Impact." n.d. CASEL. Accessed October 16, 2019. <https://casel.org/impact/>.

Soifer, Don. 2017. "Virginia's New 'School Divisions of Innovation' Plan Eyes the Future of Learning - Lexington Institute." Lexington Institute. March 3, 2017. <https://www.lexingtoninstitute.org/virginias-new-school-divisions-innovation-eyes-future-learning/>.

"Teacher Turnover: Why It Matters and What We Can Do About It." n.d. Learning Policy Institute. Accessed October 16, 2019. <https://learningpolicyinstitute.org/product/teacher-turnover-report>.

"Virginia Performs: Measuring What Matters to Virginians." 2016. 2016. https://vaperforms.virginia.gov/Economy_workforceQuality.cfm.

———. n.d. Accessed October 16, 2019. https://vaperforms.virginia.gov/Education_edAttainment.cfm.

"YouthTruth Student Survey." n.d. YouthTruth. Accessed October 16, 2019. <https://youthtruthsurvey.org/>.

PHOTO CREDITS

All photos from Adobe Stock

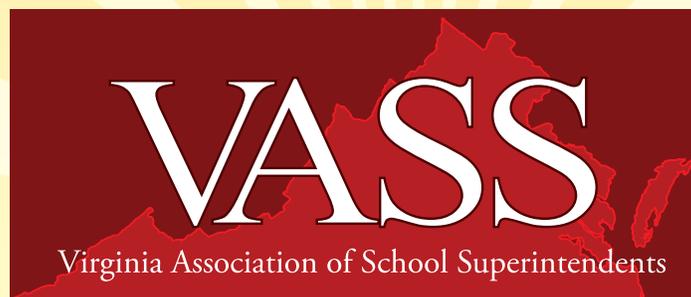
P 1 Background ©PR Image Factory; Inset ©Monkey Business; VA sketch ©squarelogo

P 2 ©BillionPhotos.com; P 3 ©Rawpixel.com; P 4 ©michaeljung; P 6 ©Luis Louro

P 9 ©Pixel-Shot; P 11 ©Andy Dean; P 12 & 14 ©Prostock-studio; P 13 ©frog; P 16 ©sinha

The partnerships forged through
implementation of the goals,
objectives and strategies
in this Blueprint for Equity
will ensure that

VIRGINIA IS FOR LEARNERS,
all learners,
no matter where they live
or the circumstances of their lives.



www.vassonline.org
804-562-4430